THIS MAN'S EYE MEANS SAFETY TO GREAT LINERS

A Day with the Quiet Civilian-Garbed Pilot Who Guides the Huge Transatlantic Boats Through the Channels of this Port.

Nerve, Quick Wit and a Rugged Body Are Among His Assets.

SOME PILOTS OF THE PORT OF NEW YORK

By THORNTON FISHER.

FIFTEEN or twenty minutes prior to the sailing hour of a huge transatlantic liner an unassuming man carrying a travelling bag joins the stream of passengers going up the gangplank. There is nothing to distinguish him from the hundreds of other male travellers, and you suspect he is an American business man going abroad for recreation. And yet for the space of two hours (sometimes twenty) this individual guides the destiny of the ship and its human cargo through the tortuous waters of the bay until it reaches the open sea. He is a pilot for the Port of New York and there are one hundred and nineteen of him in active service at the present time.

I was privileged recently to spend a work day with the pilots. It began at Pier 62, North River, where the steamship New York was waiting for the signal that sends her on the voyage across the sea. The final blare of the bugle warning visitors ashore was sounded, promptly at the hour of 10 and gangplanks were released and, with an almost imperceptible movement, accompanied by a prolonged blast of the siren, the big liner left the dock and pointed her prow to the eastward.

SIMPLICITY CONTRARY TO PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS.

On the bridge before the wheelhouse stood Captain Roberts, a navigator, and Pilot Sayles, who had apparently been one of the throng of passengers a few brief moments before. One of the delusions of humankind is the mental association of authority at sea with glitteringly uniformed men who with ceaseless vigil pace the ship's deck. However, this keen eyed, ruddy complexioned man standing at the captain's side, attired in civilian apparel, does not bear a visible mark indicative of his calling, unless it be the alert manner with which he scans the water or searches intently for landmarks on the shore.

Out past Governor's Island, the Statue of Liberty, slowly by Staten Island and you are in the open. On one side of the Jersey Highlands lofty shores rise, only to recede and disappear from view. In the distance Long Island is lost where the ocean meets the sky. The ship ploughs cautiously through the waters, obeying the slightest command of the pilot on the bridge, since it would be a comparatively easy matter to run her nose into the mud. The navigator, however, knows his course as an officer knows his beat.

THE PILOT DOES NOT OPERATE STEERING APPARATUS.

It may be explained that the pilot does not operate the steering apparatus of the vessel under his charge. He communicates by a word or gesture of the hand to the man at the helm all directions for the course, which are repeated by the helmsman in acknowledgment of the order. "Steady! Steady!" says the pilot. "Steady, sir," responds the man at the wheel. "Port," directs the pilot, and again comes the echo, "Port."

In the mean time, while the navigator is engaged on the bridge, the passengers are busy writing farewell letters and telegrams to be dispatched with the pilot. Sandy Hook has now been left behind and the open sea is ahead. The pilot's work is finished, at least temporarily, and the captain grips him by the hand, wishes him good luck and orders the speed of the ship reduced as the navigator prepares to depart.

A yawl manned by two sturdy lads draws alongside the huge vessel. "Can you swim?" inquires the kindly pilot. Being assured by me in the affirmative, he swings over the side and descends "Jacob's ladder," as the rope ladder has come to be known among the seamen.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FACT AND IMAGINATION.

The uninitiated instinctively shudder as they gaze down the perpendicular depth at the tiny yawl bobbing up and down with every wave that strikes the ship. From the lower deck to the waterline is perhaps twenty-five feet, varying with the proportions of the vessel, but I venture the assertion from personal experience that the distance negotiated between the deck and the yawl was no less than twenty-five hundred feet.

The crew, having lowered the pilot's travelling bag and mail sack, gently urge me to follow down the ladder. I cautiously lift myself over the side and, gripping the ladder until the nails, meeting the palm, dig into the flesh, attempt to place my foot on the first rope rung. Slowly, calculating each step and tenaciously clinging to the ladder, which sways with each motion of my body, I gradually reach the bottom rung. A false movement might precipitate the novice into the water below. Timing myself, I drop into the yawl as it rises on a wave, and in a twinkling the boys are pulling with long sweep oars for the pilot boat, two hundred yards away.

THE FEEL OF A DECK AFTER "JACOB'S LADDER."

There is a peculiar sense of relief in feeling a solid deck beneath one's feet again. The yawl is hoisted to the boat's deck, ready to put a pilot aboard an incoming ship or receive one from an outgoing craft. The pilot fleet has four of these boats patrolling the entrance to the Port of New York and one held in reserve. They are the Ambrose Snow No. 2, the Trenton No. 4 and the Washington No. 5, sailing vessels, and the steamers New York and New Jersey. This fleet is on duty twenty-four hours a day for 365 days a year. A total complement of fifteen pilots is maintained on each of the steamers ready for instant duty at any hour. Through the long days and nights these men sweep the horizon for ships requiring their services.

Twenty years ago there were two companies of pilots, the Sandy Hook Pilots and the New Jersey Pilots' Association, each operating independently. In those days only sailing vessels were used and competition was keen between the two companies. Each was eager to put its pilot aboard an incoming craft and receive the pilotage fee. Frequently these pilot ships cruised six hundred miles to sea to beat their rivals. It is not to be wondered that the men have developed vigilance, overlooking nothing within range of vision.

As early as 1789 laws respecting pilots and pilotage were made by the several states and were recognized by Congress. In June, 1853, an act "To Provide for the Licensing and Governing of Pilots and Regulating the Pilotage of the Port of New York" was passed. By this statute the commissioners, five in number, are elected, three by the Chamber of Commerce and two by the Board of Underwriters. This body is known as the "Board of Commissioners of Pilots for the Port of New York." Competition has, therefore, been eliminated and the pilots work for the common good. To-day there are two branches operating under the Board of Commissioners of Pilots. They are pilots licensed by the State of New York, which has seventy-nine men on the active list, and those licensed by the State of New Jersey, with forty in active service.

The pilot's occupation is no sinecure. It is a man's-size job from the very beginning. An aspirant for a pilot's license must possess a superabundance of nerve, quick wit and a rugged constitution.

THE APPRENTICESHIP OF THE APPLICANT.

The embryo navigator is received as an applicant, and upon qualifying is assigned as an apprentice aboard a pilot boat, where he is subject to the discipline of the pilots. Here he must meet the severe tests of endurance and courage stoically. He may not call a second his own, for he is never off duty. If he does catch an opportune moment for a cat nap it must be with one eye open and one ear as well, for who knows when a pilot shall be summoned to take an incoming vessel into port, or at what moment an outgoing vessel will drop a pilot. The lad must stand by to man the yawl that conveys the pilot to and from the ships. It may be the midnight hour with a stiff gale blowing over a choppy sea and a starless sky overhead when the call comes to lower the small boat, and with his apprentice mate pull for a ship with all the vigor at his command. Or a dense fog may hang low when the fog horn alone indicates to him the proximity of the boat. Then, he is certain to encounter stormy nights when the thunder clashes and the lightning streaks the sky, and his little craft tosses like a match on the waves, not to mention the icy blasts of winter.

QUALITIES DEVELOPED IN THE CUB PILOT.

He rolls up in his bunk for a two-hour snooze only to be routed out half an hour later to stand by. Thus is instilled in him the elements of alertness and fortitude. His presence of mind, too, is developed, for he must think and couple action to the thought instantly. Above all he is taught courtesy and respect to his superiors. The apprentice obeys the command of the pilot with alacrity. For a period of nine or ten years he continues his work in this hard school, earning his promotion from apprentice to boat-keeper. As boat-keeper he is compelled to serve for three years in one vessel. During his last three months of apprenticeship the young boat-keeper wins the coveted opportunity to accompany the pilot, who instructs him in the handling of large ocean-going ships. He learns the signals employed, particularly the bells, whistles, and other orders, and the method of berthing and unberthing the vessels. His curriculum has also included work on the pilots' sailboats, and he is now ready for his first examination for licensed pilot. If he is successful he enters the first grade; that is, he is not permitted to pilot any vessel drawing more than eighteen feet of water. In his second year he may handle ships drawing 24 feet, the third 28 and after the fourth year he is qualified as a full branch pilot.

As a licensed pilot he is assigned to one of the pilot boats on patrol between the Lightship and Ambrose Channel about five miles off Sandy Hook. Each of these boats has a blackboard in its cabin, indicating the name and turn of every pilot on duty. When the navigator at the head of the list boards an incoming vessel, the second pilot on the blackboard goes to the top of the list and so on, while the pilots arriving from ocean-bound steamers go to the foot of the list to await their turn. With a full quota of fifteen men always on board, it frequently happens that a pilot will remain several days before he brings a vessel into port, and even then he may suffer a delay. Should his turn be reached shortly before sundown it may be impossible for his boat to reach Quarantine in time to be passed by the doctor, and he must anchor off Quarantine until 6 o'clock next morning. When he reaches Quarantine before the sun sets and is passed, he smiles and calls it "saving the doctor," a common phrase on board the pilot boats.

Having successfully docked his charge, he notifies the Pilots' Association of his time of arrival, and his name goes upon the board in the association's office, in State st. He has perhaps a few hours he may spend in the bosom of his family, but the time must be brief because it is essential that he report in person to the office, for his name may be reached in two or three hours, and he can take no chances. For him to miss his turn will mean subjection to three days' vacation without pay.

Self-effacement is the first and final word in this unusual business. He cannot make a social appointment with any degree of assurance that he will keep it, for his turn may take him to the pilot boat at any moment, there to wait a portbound vessel. To spend a day on a pilot boat is to see the real bar pilot.

When the navigator reaches the pilot ship he hastens below and emerges soon after attired in knockabouts, some donning blue flannels and overalls, others preferring only old clothes.

A FALLACIOUS OBSERVATION MEETS UNTIMELY DEATH.

It is easy to believe that these men, lolling about the deck, have not a care or responsibility in the world, and just as I am mentally engaged in this fallacious observation a vigilant pilot sights a craft on the horizon. I look fixedly in the direction he has indicated only to ask myself if my eyesight is failing, for I do not see a single object on the water. I am further distressed by his statement when he mentions the name of the ship. Soon, however, the bark heaves in sight, and the name on her bow silently substantiates the pilot's observation.

It is nearly meal time now, and the invigorating salt air has caused an insattiable appetite, which is aggravated by the aroma of coffee coming from the cabin of the boat. Suddenly a little man of Oriental visage appears, vigorously ringing a dinner bell, and an impromptu procession of pilots starts for the dining salon, where two Japanese stewards are waiting to serve them. Two more Japs are employed as cooks, and it is no small task to prepare appetizing dishes for this healthy, rugged lot of men.

AFTER DINNER ON THE PILOT BOAT.

Dinner finished, they return to the deck, while one or two, having been warned of the approach of vessels, hastily prepare to disembark in the yawl. Perhaps it has been a heavy day and the number of pilots left on the boat falls below the required complement. In this case sufficient pilots are despatched from New York by another pilot boat and the exigency met.

At the top of the mast flutters the blue pilot flag, an indication to incoming ships that pilots are aboard. When darkness falls, however, the flag is hauled down and a brilliant white light hangs at the masthead which can be seen for many miles at sea on a clear night. Every precaution is exercised on the pilot patrols. Each pilot serves a two-hour watch in the wheelhouse, with a helmsman and an extra man on duty ready for any emergency. Down below the other men have tumbled into their curtained bunks to grab a few winks before their turn. The only sound that breaks the stillness is the throbbing engine and the gentle swish of the water as the craft plows its way.

Off in the direction of the Jersey Coast Navesink light flashes intermittently, while a short distance to the east the Ambrose lightship gleams. One occasionally catches the reiterated warning of the whistling buoy.

Somewhere out in the vast darkness a blue light burns for a few moments and is extinguished, but the quick eye of the pilot in the wheelhouse has caught it and the pilot boat responds with a waving torch. There is a wireless apparatus aboard the pilot boat, but these signals are sufficient. The patrol has changed its course and is heading for the incoming vessel. In the meantime the apprentice lads are lowering the little yawl and the pilot whose turn has arrived rolls out of his bunk, hastily attires himself and goes down "Jacob's ladder." A small lantern in the tiny craft is the only illumination used as they silently pull away from the pilot boat.

The nerve-trying season for the bar pilot begins in January and lasts until the mild spring days come. When the stormy winter gales are blowing and the ladders are ice-laden a stout heart is demanded to put out for the side of a vessel when the chances are about even for slipping into the frigid water.

TWENTY-ONE PILOTS LOST IN BLIZZARD OF 1888.

During the blizzard of 1888 three boats, with twenty-one pilots, disappeared. Between 1839 and 1895 forty-six pilot boats were lost during various storms and fully as many pilots. The pilot himself is reticent when one suggests the dangers of his vocation. He merely shrugs his shoulders and says it's all in the day's work. He abhors the limelight, and thus it is that comparatively few are intimately acquainted with his life and duties. Many lives are saved annualy due to his eternal vigilance, but instances are rare when the public hears of them. In the summer season small pleasure craft frequently cruise beyond the bounds of safety, either guided by a venturesome spirit or loss of direction. Only last summer, among numerous other cases, a small naphtha launch containing a man was discovered speeding seaward. A pilot, observing the boat, hailed it and inquired whither it was bound, and was told that the craft was going to New York. The man was at once ordered to come aboard the pilot boat, and was amazed to learn that had he been permitted to pursue his course he would have found himself at the mercy of the ocean. Both man and launch were taken to New York that evening, but no one except the pilots and the grateful passenger were aware of what might have been a tragedy.

These men of the sea might tell strange tales of daring and heroism could they be induced to talk about their work, but they regard this calling as a daily task to be done, so why talk about it? As one pilot said to me: "There is a whole lot of satisfaction just in bringing your ship into port without an accident. You feel that you have accomplished something." And there you have it.

A TICKLISH UNDERTAKING FOR THE NOVICE

WHY THE TOWER OF PISA LEANS

PROFESSOR WILLIAM H. GOODYEAR, curator of fine arts in the Brooklyn Institute Museum, believes that the Leaning Tower of Pisa was meant to lean. This to the lay mind may sound like the ultimate cause for excitement, but in reality it involves a lifetime of study and a theory, now pretty well substantiated, concerning Gothic architecture which is not unlikely in future profoundly to affect the designing of all monumental buildings—the theory that the variations from symmetry in this style of architecture were not the result of accident, but were deliberately intended to convey certain optical effects. They account, Professor Goodyear and his followers think, for the richness of the mediæval design as compared with its modern imitation. Professor Goodyear calls them refinements.

The irony contained in the appellation is only apparent to us—influenced as we are by the Gothic revival—when we consider that the Italians of the Renaissance period, whose style of architecture still dominates our own, gave the name Gothic to the mediæval buildings because they despised them and the culture they expressed as ugly and barbarous. Gothic, as applied to architecture, meant the architecture of barbarians, of Goths and Vandals. It is in this architecture, so richly represented by so many of the famous cathedrals of Europe, that Professor Goodyear finds refinements which the Italians of the Renaissance and their modern descendants in art always considered defects due to the lack of modern instruments.

In the course of years of travel and research in this matter Professor Goodyear has collected about 800 surveys and photographs to illustrate his point. These are permanently on exhibition at the Brooklyn Institute Museum. This month he selected some two hundred of them to exhibit in Dublin, Ireland, where he has given a series of lectures on the refinements of Gothic architecture under the auspices of the Classical Association, the Royal Institute of Architects and the Architectural Association of Ireland. In a lecture before the Royal College of Science he asks what may be the philosophy behind these variations from symmetry, these refinements, and he answers himself as follows:

"Briefly, I consider it to be this, that a free-hand sketch is better art than a drawing made with a ruler and a T square. Now, the philosophy of architectural refinements consists in this, that some mediæval buildings are, from natural causes, comparable to the free-hand sketch as against the design made with a ruler, and that others have been planned for the advantages of the free-hand drawing in all the main lines of the building, and this could be done only by predetermined arrangements of the masonry.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURE OF MEDIÆVAL BUILDERS.

"Since the days of Owen Jones and of the decorative art movement, which began about 1850, we have all realized that hand made lace is better than machine made; that Indian and Persian rugs, with their variations of detail, are better than European carpets, with their repeated diaper patterns; that the asymmetry of Japanese design is one of its greatest features; that the architectural detail of the Greek, the Roman and the mediæval builders is better generally than our own, because it has the personal touch. This is also what distinguishes many mediæval plans and many mediæval elevations, the personal touch.

"And here we come again to the significance of these observations from a broad point of view. I have pointed to one significance in the astonishing disappearance of all traditions relating to refinements. Now we come to another, the significance of these facts for sociology. The personal touch in the mediæval building is not only the work of an architect, but it is the work of an architect who was also a mason—who was in sympathy with other masons who were in sympathy with him, and who had traditional habits or methods which the architect or master mason did not have to invent or impose upon his workmen. Thus the study of mediæval refinements involves the subject of sociology and of industrial and social conditions."

SPIRAL STAIRWAY IN LEANING TOWER OF PISA.

Professor Goodyear's minutely careful observation of the Leaning Tower of Pisa furnishes an excellent example of the methods by which he has arrived at his conclusions concerning mediæval refinements in architecture. He has measured or has had measured the height of the ceiling of the spiral stairway on each side of the stairway on every step of the tower, and as a result of these painstaking measurements he has found that the spiral stairway of the three lower stories of the tower alternately rises and falls in height with relation to the overhang or variation from the perpendicular of the outside walls. These changes, he points out, diminish the weight of the masonry on the side of the overhang and relatively increase this weight on the side opposed to the overhang.

"The changes," he concludes, therefore, "must have had a purpose, and this purpose must have been to give additional stability to an intentionally inclined construction."

He goes on to reduce to absurdity the argument that the variation from the perpendicular in the tower is due to the settlement of its foundations by remarking that the builders must have known, according to his measurements, which way the building was ultimately going to lean. And he adds:

"The Leaning Tower is the latest of the four great buildings on the Piazza del Duomo, and is certainly an extreme instance of the Pisan dislike for formalism and monotonous uniformity."

The Rev. Dr. Mahaffy, vice-provost of Trinity College, Dublin, in speaking at the opening of Professor Goodyear's exhibition in that city, dwelt upon the discovery of refinements, or curvature in rectilinear building, in Greek and Roman architecture. This discovery, he said, explained why all imitations of the classical style seemed so cold and dull.

"It seems to me," he went on, "that if Professor Goodycar makes good his researches we shall come to similar conclusions about Gothic buildings. The modern Gothic churches are never anything like the mediæval church. We have got tired of them. They are cold and hard, more especially if you take many of the buildings with which Sir Gilbert Scott thought he adorned the country. They are all stone dead. There is not one of them living. More than likely, if he had known these principles of curvature he would have produced something better than he did. Until these principles are thoroughly understood and used I think we may say that the Gothic style is a style that does not appeal to most of us."

But Professor Goodyear sees in the changed social and industrial conditions of the present day an obstacle to the reintroduction of refinements in architecture.

"Herein," he says, "lies the great difficulty of this matter for the modern architect. Personally he may approve and like the mediæval methods, but to apply them now means enormous expense. The masons are no longer the same. Above all, the architect cannot do much in this direction unless the public demands the personal touch in building. At present the public does not make this demand. However, in the last few years some very remarkable and very hopeful steps have been taken by architects. The new Western Union Telegraph Building in New York, the new building of the Technological Institute in Boston, both by William Welles Bosworth; the cathedral of Toronto, by Ralph Adams Crane; the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, by Heins and La Farge; the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo, by Green and Wicks, and the Excelsior Palace Hotel, on the Lido, in Venice, by Sardi, are among the examples which might be cited."

A STUDY OF KISSING ON PIERS

"KISSING!" exclaimed the watchman on the pier of one of the big English transatlantic steamship lines, "what do I know about kissing? Why, say, I could write a book about it.

"I've worked here for the company twenty-five years," he went on. "I've seen the arrival of almost every steamer in that time, and been on hand for the sailings, too, and what I haven't noticed in the line of plain, fancy and assorted kissing has never been done, that's all.

"Take the arrival of one of those big flyers, for instance. That's the best time to stand near the gangplank and keep your eyes open. Not that there isn't often something worth while lamping when a steamer sails, but then, you see, people are arriving two and three hours ahead of time, visitors are wandering all over the ship, many of them in the stateroom of their friends or relatives, and, anyhow, a sailing parts friends, and there is not apt to be that spontaneity of osculatory salutation."

The watchman swallowed hard, but never batted an eye as he pronounced the word.

THE HOURS PRECEDING THE BIG BOAT'S ARRIVAL.

"On the arrival of a big boat," he continued, "it is entirely different. Uncertain as to just when she will dock, people who want to greet some one on board flock to the pier at all hours. By the time she is sighted off the Hook there are usually dozens of them pacing the piers, standing at the ends, gazing expectantly down the river. Some one gets on the telephone, finds the vessel has left Quarantine, passes the word along and then you never saw such an eager, anxious bunch in all your life.

"When the steamer's off the end of the pier is the time to watch if you want to behold something peculiar in human antics. They'll nearly trample each other to death to get to one of the openings at the side of the pier and wave an umbrella, hat or piece of green cloth, or something like that, because in the last exchange of letters it was arranged that each would wave the same thing, so each would be able to pick out the other, and the result is that every one is waving hats, umbrellas and green rags until everything is as calm as a riot.

"No, I haven't come to the kissing part of it yet. Just wait. The ship is coming slowly alongside the pier, near enough for those ashore to recognize the faces of passengers at the rails. How they yell!

THE WILD MEDLEY THAT A WATCHMAN HEARS.

"'There she is!' 'There he is!' 'There's mamma there; see, with the yellow feather in her hat, next to the man with the black-rimmed glasses.' 'Don't you see!' 'Look, there.' 'She's waving.' 'Oo-hoo-oo-hoo!' 'Holy Smokes! Look at Jack! Isn't he fat?' 'Where'd you get the dog?' 'Oh, I see Annie.' 'Wow, wow, wow.' 'Wee, wee, wee'——

"Didn't you ever hear them rave on the pier? It's enough to set you crazy.

"Here comes the gangplank now. Just watch 'em. They make it fast and each passenger with a little red landing card in his hand makes a bee line for shore. There's about four hundred passengers on the ship and about a thousand on shore to meet them. They've been waiting hours, some of them, right there for one moment of catch-as-catch-can kissing, and usually the passengers are in no mood to deny them.

"The first ashore is a big, chesty fellow who has held the place at the rail all the way up the Bay. He gets off the gangplank, has one foot outside of the inclosure about it, and bing——

"The girl in the blue suit with the white lace collar, who has been hopping about all the afternoon, tackles him about the neck. Passengers right behind him push him out of the way, but they never notice it. They are alone in a desert. Here comes a middle-aged man, whose whole family—wife, children, brothers, sisters, and goodness knows who else—is waiting for him. He kisses them all, right down the line; then does it over again. Then the whole pier is a kissfest.

"Kissing is not engaged in exclusively between members of opposite sexes either. Women give each other those pesky little pecks, and even men, particularly if they're foreigners—especially Frenchmen—will fall all over each other and embrace and kiss almost the same as the man who has been away on a three weeks' trip abroad and is met by his fiancée.

"If I had time I could describe a dozen different styles of kisses. I can almost tell if the persons greeting each other are brother and sister, cousins related by marriage, married themselves, engaged or acquaintances presuming on the spirit of the occasion to get away with something. In much the same way it is possible to distinguish the nationality of the kisser or the kissee. From England, France, Spain, Germany or the East comes a different form of salute that can be distinguished with a little study.

FUNNY HAPPENINGS IN THE MELÉE ON PIER.

"Sometimes there are little occurrences that lend fun to the scene. Of course, every one is laughing, chattering and happy, and in the mêlée perfect strangers are apt to embrace by mistake and press a kiss or two upon each other before the error is discovered.

"It has happened more than once during my time, too, that a girl will have more than one youth awaiting her on the pier, and when she steps ashore I've seen some pretty lively doings that it took a policeman to put an end to when both attempted to claim what was theirs by right of being on the pier to meet her.